Under utilisation of budgetary allocations for tourism

*4308. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the budgetary allocation to the Department of Tourism for the financial year 2005-06 has been curtailed as against the provisions for the year 2004-05; if so, the reasons therefor;

(b) whether it is a fact that the Department could not fully utilize its budget allocated during the last few years and if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether responsibility of some officials has been fixed for non-utilisation of departmental Budget and if so, the action taken against them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Development of tourism in Maharashtra

4309. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Maharashtra has submitted a special plan for development of tourism in the State to remove regional imbalance;

(b) if so, the salient features and the estimated cost thereof;

(c) the quantum of Central Government aid sought therefor; and

(d) what is Government's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) to (d) Development of tourist places/spots is a continous process. Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the State Governments/UT Administrations identifies such places of tourist interest including the State of Maharashtra, Based on project proposals received from the States, Ministry of Tourism provides financial assistance for development of their infrastructure. During 2004-05 projects worth Rs. 16.00 crore were sanctioned for development of tourism in Maharashtra.

* Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Loan assistance, was also availed from the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of Japan (now known as the Japan Bank for International Cooperation) for the development of Ajanta-Ellora (Phase-I) to the tune of 3745 million Japanese Yen. In addition to these completed projects loan has also been approved for the development of Ajanta Ellora Phase-II for an amount of 7331 million Japanese Yen and this project is presently under implementation.

Long term strategies to promote tourism

4310. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is the fifth tourist destination in the world;

(b) if so, what is India's position during the last three years; and

(c) what long-term strategies are proposed to be evolved to promote tourism?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) The leading travel magazine "Conde Nast Traveller" in its Readers Awards has selected India as one of the top 6 favourite destinations of the world for discerning travellers. The "Lonely Planet", in its survey conducted in 134 countries, selected India amongst the top 5 favourite international destinations.

(b) Rank of India in terms of world tourist arrivals has varied between 50—53 during 2000 to 2002. Information for the subsequent years has yet to be received from the World Tourism Organization.

(c) A number of long term measures have been taken to promote tourism, including:

- Positioning and maintaining tourism development as a National priority activity;
- Enhancing and maintaining the competitiveness of India as a tourism destination;
- Improving India's existing tourism products and expanding these to meet new market requirements;
- Creation of world class infrastructure;
- Special thrust to rural and small segment tourism;